

# Kennecott to Spruce Up, Add Areas of Vegetation

By Mike Gorrell  
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Kennecott Copper will spend another \$1.5 million this year to spruce up the appearance of its mining operations around the Oquirrh Mountains.

Grasses and thousands of trees and shrubs will be planted, from the sloping waste-rock piles surrounding the Bingham Canyon mine to the sprawling tailings impoundment north of Magna.

The vegetative cover has a practical purpose. It reduces erosion and the number of dust storms generated by the wind that rarely ceases in the western Salt Lake Valley. But it also has aesthetic value, giving a more pleasant appearance to Kennecott's \$154 million (so far) environmental cleanup and its \$920 million modernization program.

"The work keeps us busy," said Fred Fox, Kennecott Copper's director of environmental affairs, in a reclamation review Wednesday for the Utah Board of Oil, Gas and Mining.

As it did last year, Kennecott's reclamation face lift will focus primarily on two areas, Fox said: The 5,700-acre tailings pile, and properly east of the Bingham pit that was contaminated with mining wastewater.

The tailings pile was a major sore point several years ago for Magna residents, who were inundated with its dust whenever there were northerly winds.

Kennecott has used several approaches to stabilize the tailings and is stepping up the effort with help from the University of Utah and the Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility.

University assistant professor Richard McNeary and mining-engineering students are studying the use of Central Valley's sewage sludge on the tailings. Sludge could increase nutrient levels in the sandlike tailings, making them more supportive of plants.

"We're looking at good science here," said Fox. "It will take 10 years to get all the reports out."

Kennecott's commitment to control dust from the tailings impoundment has impressed Jim Brusatto, chairman of the Magna Area Council's environmental health and welfare committee.

"They're making a good-faith effort on the tailings. I appreciate the way they're working and have no reason to distrust them," he said. "But we keep reminding them, where are we

going to be 25 to 30 years from now when they shut down? Hopefully the tailings will be stabilized then."

Kennecott will spend \$465,000 on the impoundment this year, Fox said, up from \$380,000 in 1994.

The company has budgeted \$620,000 for work in the area east of the pit (\$439,000 was spent there last year to control erosion and establish vegetation).

Much of the coming year's effort involves dust control on more than 1,000 acres of land commonly known as the "South Jordan evaporation ponds." Contaminated wastewater was deposited there to evaporate.

Kennecott has removed the materials that generate acids, arsenic and lead potentially damaging to groundwater supplies as part of its overall cleanup effort. The reclamation project's goal is to recontour the ground into grass-covered hills and dales.

Other remediation projects entail planting grasses around the Bingham Canyon mine, copper concentrators, the new smelter and the refinery; wetlands enhancement along the Great Salt Lake; and improving the appearance of the Oquirrh's north face through terrace manipulation and seeding, Fox said.

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